

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 10, 2005

The Honorable Michael Johanns
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Secretary Johanns:

Section 1614 of the 2002 Farm Bill requires USDA to develop a system to track farm payments to the individuals or entities who ultimately receive the benefits of the payments. It has been three years since the 2002 Farm Bill was signed into law by President Bush, and USDA has yet to develop such a system.

In this time of tight budgets and increased public scrutiny of government spending, it is crucial that data about farm payments be as transparent as possible. USDA's delay in tracking this data undermines the ability of Congress to make sound policy decisions based on the best available information. The Commission on the Application of Payment Limits for Agriculture recognized the importance of access to this data in its final report, stating that "USDA needs to make a meaningful commitment to implementing section 1614 of the 2002 Act." That report was issued two years ago, but USDA has yet to act.

As Senators that represent agricultural states with many farm program recipients, we believe that access to this information is vital to maintain the public's confidence in, and the integrity of, our farm programs in the future. We look forward to hearing your plans to ensure that this data is made available as quickly as possible, as the 2002 Farm Bill requires.

Sincerely,



Charles Grassley
United States Senate



Byron L. Dorgan
United States Senate